

Safety Outcome 2:**Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible.**

In spite of steady progress in improving the recurrence of maltreatment, California has not met the national standards for the safety composites. The State made significant progress by meeting the PIP goals in all safety items including the data indicators. Key strategies were implemented as part of the PIP and include the Standardized Safety Assessment System, which promotes a uniform practice of assessing safety, risk and needs; and, Differential Response which is a customized and individualized response to a family's strengths and needs. However, performance for children who are victims of repeat maltreatment is still below the national standard.

ONSITE REVIEW

The onsite review will be an opportunity to further explore practices that contribute to or are barriers to improved performance. Areas to explore during the onsite review include:

- How are counties doing in maintaining model fidelity of the standardized safety assessment tools? What are the quality assurance practices, such as are supervisors monitoring, that are utilized to ensure that the tool being used throughout the life of a case?
- Are there specific practices such as participatory case planning that are widely used within the county?

3. TWO ADDITIONAL SITES FOR ONSITE REVIEW

The onsite review takes place in three sites across the State. Los Angeles County, California's largest metropolitan subdivision is a required site and described at the end of this section. Fresno County and Santa Clara County were selected as the other two sites. The methodology for selecting the onsite review is determined on which counties are most representative of the State as a whole in population, ethnic diversity, capacity and consistency with statewide outcome performance data. Population and ethnic diversity are based on 2000 Census Data. Capacity, including ability, size and logistics are evaluated to ensure a selected site is sufficient and capable of facilitating the onsite review. This incorporates adequate case sampling levels, host facilities and services, and also weather considerations at the time of the review. Consistency with statewide outcome performance data is measured by comparing each county's individual performance with overall statewide performance data to enable the review team to explore any major issues emerging from the statewide assessment. Further, counties are balanced by factors that include collaboration with tribes, courts, probation and community partners; implementation of promising approaches like Family to Family; and, contrast among counties implementing Child Welfare Systems Improvement Pilot and type of safety, risk and needs assessment tools.

FRESNO COUNTY is located near the center of California's San Joaquin Valley, one of the richest and most productive agricultural counties in America. In 2000, the county's population was 799,407 with 59.5% Latino, 21.8% White, 8.9% Asian, 6.2% African American, 2.2% identified as multi-racial,

1.4% Native American, and .1% Pacific Islander. Approximately 17.6% of families are living in poverty; the median income is \$34,725 for households and \$38,455 for families.

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is an integrated department mandated to provide public child welfare services and children's mental health services. Fresno County child welfare practices include Family to Family, Family Group Decision Making, Multi-disciplinary Teams, Wraparound, and ongoing collaboration with education, probation, and the courts. Mental health services span Early Mental Health Initiative through outpatient services including school based programs, a 24 hour children's crisis center, services for dual diagnosed youth, and services for youth and their family who are under the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Dependency Court.

There are three federally recognized tribes in Fresno County: Big Sandy, Cold Springs and Table Mountain Rancherias. A Department of Children and Family Services supervisor is a designated representative to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) Task Force. This person resolves communication problems; participates on Team Decision Making staffings; identifies voluntary maintenance services; and facilitates prompt notice and status review reports according to federal ICWA mandates. None of the local tribes have a tribal court, thus dependency must be maintained in the Fresno County courts.

Efforts to improve relationships with the court include: the Dependency Court judges meet with DCFS Assistant Director and the court social worker supervisor regularly; County Counsel meets monthly with DCFS program managers, supervisors, and court officers; and, county counsel represents DCFS and attends disposition hearings and trials.

SANTA CLARA COUNTY is a unique county in the bay area of Northern California encompassing two major cities, San Jose and Santa Clara. It has a total population of approximately 1.7 million people with approximately 500,000 being under the age of 18. The racial makeup of the county is 44.2% White, 2.6% Black or African American, .3% Native American, 25.4% Asian, 0.3% Pacific Islander, .2% from other races, and 3.0% from two or more races. 24.0% of the population were Hispanic or Latino of any race. By the year 2010, the demographics of Santa Clara County are expected to change to the point where Hispanics become a majority population. The per capita income per household is \$32,795 annually with 7% of the population living below the poverty line.

Santa Clara Children and Family Services underwent an extensive reorganization process in 2005 in order to improve service delivery for child welfare families. As a result, Santa Clara County has implemented the following practices to address the needs of the children and families in their County: Unified Children of Color task force, California Connected by 25 Initiative, educational rights project, Team Decision Making/ Family Group Conferencing, and Diversion and Intensive In-Home supervision Programs. The county maintains good relationships within the community and utilizes several family resource centers for service delivery.

Santa Clara has an excellent working relationship with their Juvenile and Probation presiding judges who chair the educational task force for foster and probation youth and meet on a regular basis with management of the child welfare and probation agencies.

Santa Clara County has taken a leadership role in the Connected by 25, developing several models for the other 4 pilot counties. The initiative aims to connect foster youth (ages 14-25) to the community, education, housing and resources so they are able to be self sufficient by the age of 25. The county is linked with most of the Bay Area colleges and universities in order to ensure the aging out foster youth are connected with their communities. In addition, Santa Clara has over 80 beds in the housing program and has provided the residence model for other counties.

The Educational Rights project taskforce, comprised of multiple non-profit educational rights groups, legal advocacy groups, social workers, and probation, ensures Individual Educational Plans are completed and the goals are being met. The taskforce also ensure the children are connected with further education, employment assistance, and/or vocational education.

In addition to Santa Clara and Fresno counties, Los Angeles is the third county for the Onsite Review.

LOS ANGELES COUNTY is located in the southern region of California and has the largest child welfare population in the state of California. In 2000, Los Angeles County had a population of 9,948,081 of which 46.8% were of Latino or Hispanic ethnicity, 29.5% were identified as White/Caucasian, 9.7% were identified as African American/Black, 13.1% were identified as Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 0.3% was identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native. Approximately 16.7% of families are living in poverty, and the median household income is \$43,518. Of the 77,773 children currently in out-of-home care in the state of California, Los Angeles County has 26,925 of those children in their jurisdiction.

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) consists of 16 regional offices and 8 Service Planning Area's (SPAs) throughout the County with the headquarters located in downtown Los Angeles. A snapshot of Los Angeles County child welfare practices includes Differential Response (known as Points of Engagement), Family to Family, Multi-Disciplinary Teams, Wraparound, and Multi-Assessment Team. Additionally, DCFS collaborates with community-based organizations; Departments of Education, Probation, Mental Health; Los Angeles Commission for Children and Families; Children's Planning Council; Interagency Council on Child Abuse; and, the Chief Administrators Office, Service Integration Branch.

Los Angeles County is participating in the Title IV-E Waiver project and is one of the Eleven Pilot County Project sites, testing innovative practice and approaches to child welfare. The county child welfare agency has also increased efforts to improve communication with Dependency Court, Delinquency Court, and other court jurisdictions.